

## Experts urge for cervical cancer vaccine inclusion in Universal Immunisation Programme of India

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**According to current estimates, every year approximately 1.25 lakhs women are diagnosed with cervical cancer and over 75 thousand people die from the disease in India**



In a pathbreaking development around healthcare in the country, the Centre announced CERVAVAC, the country's first indigenously developed vaccine for cervical cancer on 1st September 2022.

The vaccine will be manufactured by the Serum Institute of India in Pune along with the Centre's Department of Biotechnology. To discuss about the development and the road ahead, the IHW Council under its Rapid Global Cancer Alliance, initiated a virtual expert roundtable titled, "India Against Cervical Cancer- Role of India's First Indigenous Vaccine".

During the discussion Urvashi Prasad, Director, Development Monitoring & Evaluation Office, NITI Aayog remarked, "The indigenous vaccine is a big step towards mass vaccination against HPV however misinformation and stigma around cervical cancer needs to be addressed. The need of the hour is to integrate immunisation schemes, systematically and strategically into existing health platforms in partnership with state governments."

Dr Raj Shankar Ghosh- Senior Advisor; Vaccine Delivery, India Country Office, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation while taking part in the discussion observed, "Vaccines do not work stand-alone but with an integrated approach with other schemes for better implementation and awareness. The private sector has a huge role to play in terms of collaborating with government for policy decisions and also for creating awareness with a delivery mechanism in place to ensure proper policy framework." He also emphasised on early screening for cervical cancer and significance of behavioural change communication programmes for masses.

CERVAVAC, is being touted as the most promising against human papillomavirus (HPV), with HPV types 16 and 18 (HPV-16 and HPV-18) together contributing to approximately 70% of all invasive cervical cancer cases worldwide. About Rapid Global Cancer Alliance: RAPID Cancer Initiative seeks to reduce the impact of cancer in low-and-middle income and developing countries around the world through a multi-pronged approach. It aims at providing "RAPID" solutions to complex challenges in cancer healthcare space.

